

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9272
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USICA WASHDC
DIA WASH DC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: KHADDAM REMARKS ON LEBANON
REF: BEIRUT 4741

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN PRESS DID NOT PICK UP KHADDAM'S NEGATIVE REMARKS TO BEIRUT NEWSPAPER ABOUT "OPEN CITY" AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN. NEVERTHELESS, HARD HITTING EDITORIALS OVER PAST FEW DAYS LEAD US TO CONCLUDE THAT SYRIA GAVE LITTLE AWAY TO PRIMIN HOSS DURING HIS VISIT TO BEIRUT.
END SUMMARY.

2. SYRIANS WERE TREATED TO KHADDAM'S REMARKS TO A LEBANESE
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NEWSPAPER (REFTEL) A DAY LATE AND POSSIBLY A DOLLAR SHORT. THERE IS NO MENTION OF REJECTING AN OPEN CITY PLAN OR PERSONAL COMMENTS ABOUT CAMILLE CHAMOUN. INSTEAD, THE SYRIAN PRESS STRESSED KHADDAM'S VIEW THAT LEBANON'S PROBLEMS ARE BEING STIMULATED BY ISRAEL. KHADDAM SAID THAT SYRIA IS NEITHER AGAINST CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS NOR FOR CERTAIN PERSONS BUT IS FOR THE NATIONAL LINE REPRESENTED

IN THE UNITY OF LEBANON AND NO DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL. HE AFFIRMED THAT CREATION OF A NATIONAL ANTI-PARTITION POLITICAL GROUPING IS ESSENTIAL AND SAID SYRIA SUPPORTS BUILDING OF A NATIONAL LEBANESE ARMY. ALL OF THIS IS PRETTY STANDARD FARE FOR SYRIANS.

3. AS FOR HOSS VISIT, SYRIAN PRESS HAS AVOIDED SUBSTANCE WHILE FILLING ITS PAGES WITH DETAILS OF WHO ATTENDED WHAT MEETING AND ASSURANCES THAT MEETINGS WERE BENEFICIAL AND THAT AGREEMENT WAS ACHIEVED ON "ALMOST" ALL POINTS. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE CAN REMEMBER THAT FOLLOWING A MEETING PRESS HINTED THERE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN AGREEMENT ON ALL POINTS. JUDGING FROM SPATE OF HARD-NOSE EDITORIALS ON RIGHTISTS, BOTH DURING TALKS AND AFTER, WE ASSUME EMBASSY BEIRUT IS CORRECT THAT SYRIA GAVE AWAY VERY LITTLE.

4. A THAWRA EDITORIAL AUGUST 17 IS FILLED WITH ADVICE TO LEBANESE AUTHORITIES TO PUSH LEBANESE ARMY CONTINGENT INTO SOUTH REGARDLESS OF CONSEQUENCES: "MOLESTATIONS OF THE VANGUARDS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY HEADING TOWARD THE SOUTH, NO MATTER HOW BIG AND SERIOUS THEY MAY GET, CANNOT NULLIFY THE MISSION OF THE LEBANESE FORCE OR STOP ITS ADVANCE, SINCE THE LEBANESE ARMY IS DEPLOYED OVER LEBANESE TERRITORY BY LEBANESE DECISION, NOT BY ISRAELI OR EXTERNAL DECISION." A BAATH EDITORIAL AUGUST 16 WARNED THAT THE RESULTS OF THE HOSS TALKS "MAY NOT PLEASE SOME LEBANESE FORCES WITH SUSPECT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONNECTIONS OR THOSE HIDING BEHIND THEM."

5. A THAWRA EDITORIAL AUGUST 15 MADE THE DISCOURAGING PROMISE: "NO MATTER WHAT EXCESSES AND PROVOCATIONS TAKE PLACE ON THE LEBANESE SCENE, SYRIA WILL NOT CHANGE ITS APPROACH AND POSTURE TOWARD LEBANON AND ITS PEOPLE." WHILE BAATH THE SAME DAY SAID: "IT MAY BE ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT THINGS NOW TO ADOPT DECISIVE RESOLUTIONS ON THE ISSUE OF LEBANESE PUBLIC SECURITY, PARTICULARLY IN DIFFICULT AREAS LIKE THE SOUTH OR OTHER DISTRICTS OF POLITICAL/ MILITARY FRICTION IN THE CAPITAL. NEVERTHELESS, THIS IS THE ONLY WAY (FOR THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT) TO CAPTURE THE ADMIRATION OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF LEBANESE CITIZENS AND THE RESPECT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY."

6. IN SHORT, IT LOOKS LIKE THE HOSS TALKS WILL NOT LEAD TO ANY BREAKTHROUGH. OF COURSE, WE ARE HAMPERED BY THE DEARTH OF HARD INFORMATION IN DAMASCUS AND HOPE THAT WE WILL BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED WHEN THE DETAILS COME OUT. SEELYE

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